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RELIGION

10 Evangelist Preachers Who Fell From Grace

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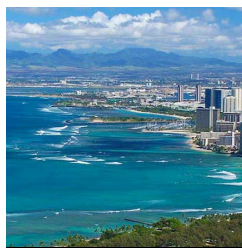
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Evangelical Christianity is often characterized by its preachers' flamboyance and charisma and their focus on entertainment and supposed acts of God over traditional churches' more somber sermons.

Among all of the showbiz and glamor, a few preachers have lost their way and become embroiled in scandal. Men like Jimmy Swaggert, whose tearful confession has become infamous, and Ted Haggard, whose anti-gay sermons were rapidly discredited when it became clear that he had employed the services of a male escort, are some of the more well-known preachers to fall from grace. This list aims to bring your attention to a few more people whose hypocrisy outshone their message.

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10 Jim Bakker



Photo credit: JimBakkerShow.com

Jim Bakker is a former member of Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority and, at one time, was among the most influential evangelist preachers in the United States. He cohosted The PTL Club with his wife for several years, interviewing several prominent faces in the Christian community in addition to raking in cash from his thousands of loyal followers.

Behind his message hid a dark secret that was revealed in 1987. Bakker had spent more than \$270,000 to silence a former employee named Jessica Hahn, who has accused him of engaging in a **forced sexual encounter** with her.

It didn't end there, however. Further investigations into Bakker's personal finances and the finances of his ministry revealed that he had been **siphoning off** large proportions of the money donated by his followers into his own bank accounts.

Bakker ended up serving time in jail for the crime, and his marriage ended soon after, amid mudslinging from both sides. He never regained the level of prominence that he had enjoyed before 1987.



Kent Hovind is part of the Young Earth creationist movement and has regularly spoken out about evolution and several other scientific subjects, urging his followers to instead believe his creationist ideas as an alternative.

At the height of his fame, he altered his image slightly to become the self-styled “Dr. Dino,” running the fairly successful Dinosaur Adventure Land in Pensacola. The dinosaur-themed park was another avenue for him to espouse his creationist viewpoint.

Unfortunately for Hovind, he also had some fairly pronounced beliefs regarding taxation, specifically that his ministry and his theme park did not have to pay federal income tax.

Hovind was arrested and found guilty of a staggering 58 charges relating to various tax issues and other financial crimes. In 2007, he was sentenced to **10 years in jail**, and his theme park was **forced to close down**.

Some contend that Hovind was **unfairly jailed** or at least has been kept locked up for longer than he deserves. Hovind, for his part, seems happy to dedicate his time to conspiracy theories while he waits for his release.

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8 Robert Tilton



Photo credit: RobertTiltonLive.com

Robert Tilton was, at one time, one of the most famous names in televangelism. His show, Success-N-Life, was beamed into homes throughout the nation and earned the pastor's church millions per year during the later 1980s and early 1990s.

One of Tilton's main tactics to get his enormous following to donate money was to ask them to send prayer requests to his ministry. He claimed he would then use his special connection to God to personally pray over the requests and increase the chance of the prayer being answered, assuming a little bit of money was sent in alongside it.

The system operated for several years until ABC's Prime Time Live caught wind of the scam. Following investigations, they released a special named "The Apple of God's Eye." Among other things, it showed how the prayer requests were simply being **thrown out in the trash**—minus the money, of course.

Tilton was **sued for fraud** by some who had sent in prayer requests in the genuine belief that he would be able to help, and his television show was thrown off the air. Though his ministry still preaches, it never came close to reaching the heights it achieved during his prime.

7 Billy James Hargis



Photo credit: [University of Arkansas Libraries](#)

Billy James Hargis's message, which included anti-communist and segregationist propaganda in addition to his evangelism, was beamed across hundreds of radio and television stations throughout the United States.

Hargis was a member of a sect called the Restoration Movement and led the Church of the Christian Crusade. For a time, he was also the president of the [American Christian College](#), but during this tenure, scandal erupted and destroyed his career.

In 1974, Time magazine printed allegations that Hargis had used his position to seduce two members of the college, one male and one female, deflowering them both in the process. The twist was that the pair were [engaged to be married](#), with the ceremony being carried out by Hargis himself. They both found out what had happened to the other on their wedding night, and Hargis promptly resigned from his position as president.

Though Hargis denied the claims, he never again reached the level of popularity he had achieved in the '60s, and a later attempt to regain the presidency of the American Christian College ended in failure. He died in 2004.

6 Peter Popoff

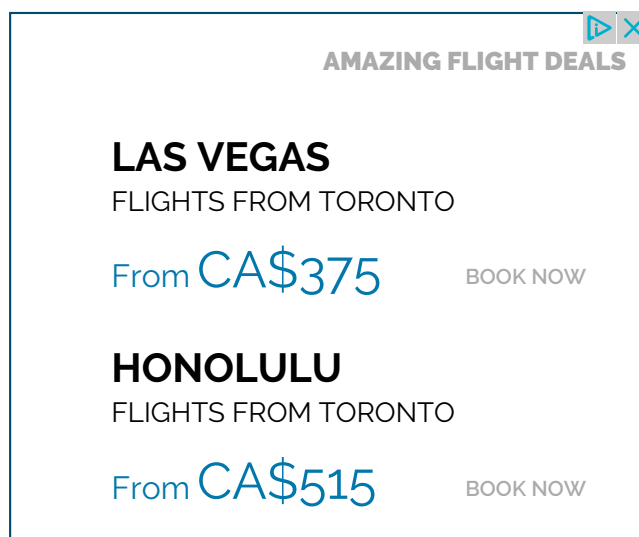


Photo credit: [KOMO News](#)

Popoff was a big name in faith healing circles in the 1980s, with his television show being broadcast nationally in the United States. The show generally took the form of Popoff calling people out of his audience and apparently using his connection with God to decipher what ailments they suffered before laying his hands on them and providing the cure.

The scam worked for several years in the 1980s, and it made Popoff a very rich man. However, his deeds eventually caught the attention of James Randi and Alexander Jason, who have made a career out of their skepticism. They investigated the ministry and found that attendees of Popoff's shows were asked to write down what they would most like before the show. These requests then went to Popoff's wife, who **used an earpiece** to communicate the really juicy ones to her husband. Peter would then call the afflicted onto the stage, feign guessing the issue they were suffering, and help them.

Following the revelations, Popoff's ministry collapsed, and he declared bankruptcy. Surprisingly, he is still **preaching the same messages** today, though to a far lesser audience than in his heyday.



The image is a screenshot of a digital advertisement for flight deals. It features a white background with a thin blue border. At the top right, there is a small icon of a play button and a close button (X). Below this, the text "AMAZING FLIGHT DEALS" is written in a bold, sans-serif font. The advertisement is divided into two sections. The first section is for "LAS VEGAS" flights from Toronto, with a starting price of "From CA\$375" and a "BOOK NOW" button. The second section is for "HONOLULU" flights from Toronto, with a starting price of "From CA\$515" and a "BOOK NOW" button. The text is clean and modern, using a mix of bold and regular weights.

Destination	Flights From	Price	Action
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Photo credit: [CNN](#)

Those of you with good memories may remember George Alan Rekers, but for those who don't, the ordained Southern Baptist minister laid claim to several doctorates that apparently made him an authority in neuroscience. He was most famous for heading the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH), which believes that, with the right therapies, gay people can be [converted to heterosexuality](#).

Of course, given his position, Rekers became something of an opponent to the entire concept of homosexuality as we understand it, which made it all the more shocking it was discovered that he was traveling in Europe [with a rent boy](#) in 2010.

In the era of social media and intense online scrutiny, Rekers was completely pilloried for the hypocrisy this demonstrated. While he tried to maintain that the man had only been hired to help him transport his bags to his hotel room, the prostitute told CNN that he had given Rekers "[sexual massages](#)" during the course of the trip. Rekers's public shaming was complete when he stepped down from his leadership position at NARTH.



Photo credit: [Jester Media](#)

Lonnie Frisbee was not like any other evangelical preacher. He dressed like a hippie and maintained the look throughout his career. Furthermore, he admitted that he struggled with homosexual urges, but he claimed that his work with the church helped him to eradicate them.

Frisbee achieved a measure of fame in the 1960s and '70s, claiming to be a "seeing prophet" and a mystic. He also regularly described homosexuality as a sin and held several sermons against the practices.

As his career moved forward, he became heavily involved in the creation of both the Jesus Movement, which appealed to the hippie counterculture, and the [Vineyard Movement](#). Both churches shied away from the more extreme messages of some other evangelical churches of the era, and Lonnie played a large part in the formation of both, achieving leadership positions in the process.

Unfortunately for Frisbee, he could not keep his urges in check, and he maintained a gay lifestyle in conflict with the messages being put out by his ministry. He was eventually downgraded from his leadership positions in both movements before being fired.

The Jesus Movement died out in the 1980s, though the Vineyard Movement is still going strong today. Lonnie's personal story ended in tragedy, as he died of AIDS in 1993, with his life being chronicled in the 2005 documentary [Frisbee: The Life and Death of a Hippie](#)

3 Gilbert Deya



Photo credit: David Levene/The Guardian

Gilbert Deya is an evangelist of Kenyan origin who ran a successful ministry in his homeland throughout the 1980s and '90s. His main claim to fame was his supposed ability to produce "miracle babies" for Kenyan couples struggling to conceive.

He set up his own church upon immigrating to the UK in 1997, and it currently has branches in several major cities throughout England, aiming to spread the message of his particular skill set.

Unfortunately, that skill set turned out to be a complete lack of anything resembling human morality. Deya's miracle babies were **stolen** from his native Kenya and delivered to the poor women who came to him. His clients were none the wiser and often paid a large sum of money for his services.

It didn't end there for Deya. In addition to the kidnapping charges, for which the Kenyan authorities are currently fighting to have him extradited back to the country, Deya was also charged with sex crimes in the UK—**three counts of rape** and one of assault on a 14-year-old girl.

Due to the charges, Deya is currently still in the UK, and it appears that British authorities won't extradite him until the trial is completed—which may be a while, given the almost **farcical nature of the trial** so far. He is yet to face any punishment for the kidnappings, and it is anyone's guess as to whether he ever will.

2 Tony Alamo



Photo via **Tony Alamo News**

Tony Alamo was the founder of the seemingly benevolent Alamo Christian Foundation, which attained popularity through its younger members preaching their particular version of the gospel out in the streets. These sessions often ended up with potential future members being taken in for a meal and a meeting with the church. This helped the foundation grow in size during the 1970s and spread their conservative message relating to homosexuality, abortion, and **sexual deviance**.

During this period, the foundation relocated and expanded its horizons, setting up drug rehabilitation programs and establishing a television presence in addition to other businesses apparently intended to help people get back on their feet. The church faced plenty of controversy as it began to grow, with several lawsuits being made against Alamo in addition to accusations that he used his position to wield a **cult-like power** over his

followers.

Beneath the surface, it appears that Tony Alamo himself was not immune from the practices against which he regularly preached. He began to face additional accusations that he had been sexually exploiting children under the banner of his foundation. The evidence mounted against Alamo, and he was convicted of 10 sex trafficking offenses relating to minors and given **175 years in jail**, which at the age of 79 amounted to life in prison for the former preacher.

Furthermore, the victims of his operation have been ordered to receive a **\$525 million compensation package** that will be paid for from the ministry's pockets. Despite these convictions, Alamo's website still protests his innocence, and the church continues to operate, though it is likely that many of its assets will need to be sold off to pay the compensation fee.

1 Mike Warnke



Photo via [WFMU](#)

For several years throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, Mike Warnke was the leading evangelical speaker when it came to Satanism and the practice of worshiping the devil. Perhaps it was unsurprising, as Warnke claimed to have been a **member of a satanic**

church in his earlier years before eventually seeing the light and converting to Christianity.

Using his insider knowledge, Warnke shaped the view of many evangelists when it came to Satan. In particular, he revealed the supposed ritualistic practices carried out by his and other cults throughout the United States.

Warnke parlayed this fame into a career as a stand-up comedian, releasing several albums in addition to books such as *The Satan Seller*. He even made an appearance on ABC's 20/20 in an episode devoted to demonic practices.

The problem? **It was all a lie**. Christian magazine Cornerstone investigated Warnke's claims and couldn't find a single person to corroborate his stories. In fact, the college friends he spoke of all claimed that he had never taken drugs and was not involved with any satanic cults of any sort.

Warnke was thoroughly discredited by the investigation, though he sometimes still claims that he was a member of a satanic cult. Today, his platform is limited to occasional preaching and stand-up shows.



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EI

3 years ago



Their 'Message' was very clear...what happened?

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not wholly different from buying indulgences.

8 ^ v Reply

Terminus Fst → EI



Terminus  El

3 years ago



The devil made them do it! But it will be OK! A few more dollars, and they will feel all better again!

1   Reply

Marozia  El

3 years ago



Give me all your money, and I'll give you instant salvation!!

  Reply

Arjan Hut

3 years ago



What makes people believe that if they send money to some guy on tv, God will hear them better? Is this something typically American? Just wondering.

"You can not petition the lord with prayer"

 **The Doors - You Cannot Petition The Lord With Prayer** – disq.us

24   Reply

Dr. Mantis Toboggan, M.D.  Arjan Hut

3 years ago



Bored/depressed/lonely/mentally ill elderly folks stuck sitting in a nursing home with strong faiths and stronger checkbooks are these weasels primary source of income. Very sad.

21   Reply

What Fuckn Ever  Arjan Hut

3 years ago



It's life Jim but not as we know it.

7   Reply



Haybomber  Arjan Hut

3 years ago



The result of a parasitic society and poorly educated citizenry....

6   Reply

Marozia  Haybomber

3 years ago



Sounds like the Royal families of the world.

2   Reply



Haybomber  Marozia

3 years ago



Fortunately...the world is finally catching on to their bullshit...

3 ^ v Reply

Dr. Mantis Toboggan, M.D. ➔ Haybomber

3 years ago

Would you be one of the educated ones, O wise man?

1 ^ v Reply



Haybomber ➔ Dr. Mantis Toboggan, M.D.

3 years ago

I know my A, B, 3's & 1, 2, C's I s'pose...

6 ^ v Reply

What Fuckn Ever ➔ Haybomber

3 years ago

Also, inbreeding.

1 ^ v Reply



Haybomber ➔ What Fuckn Ever

3 years ago

If two hutterites get married...are they still considered brother and sister?

3 ^ v Reply

What Fuckn Ever ➔ Haybomber

3 years ago

I'll have to check with my Moth...er... Wife...

4 ^ v Reply

Rikd12 ➔ What Fuckn Ever

3 years ago

Bwhahahahahaha!!!

^ v Reply

What Fuckn Ever ➔ Rikd12

3 years ago

Something funny?

^ v Reply

Rikd12 ➔ What Fuckn Ever

3 years ago

Yes. That comment made me laugh

2 ^ v Reply